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TRENDS

CONSUMER ATTITUDES & THE SUPERMARKET

1985 UPDATE

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The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) is a non-profit association that conducts programs in research, education and public affairs on behalf of its 1500 members—food retailers and wholesalers and their customers. FMI's domestic member companies operate more than 17,000 retail food stores with a combined annual sales volume of $130 billion—half of all grocery sales in the United States. More than three-fourths of the FMI membership is composed of independent supermarket operators or small regional firms. Its international membership includes more than 100 members from 40 nations.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1974, the Food Marketing Institute initiated a series of consumer attitude surveys designed to identify the changing needs, values, and priorities of the American consumer. The present study is the fourteenth in this series. *Trends 1985* continues to track and evaluate the major issues and trends from previous years while adding coverage of new issues that are likely to capture the attention of consumers over the next few years.

Content of the Study

The major trend lines continued from the previous studies include:

- Consumers' outlook on the economy, including personal expectations and predictions for price changes in the near future;
- Attitudes about supermarket responsibilities and evaluations of supermarkets' performance;
- Economizing and time-saving measures used while shopping;
- Buying habits and shopping behavior; and
- Consumer activism.

In 1983, *Trends* addressed consumers' concerns about nutrition and the ingredients in the foods they eat. As a result of the high level of interest in this topic, last year's *Trends* included an expanded coverage of this area. This year's study continues this coverage and examines:

- Nutrition-related behaviors;
- Concerns about foods with specific ingredients; and
- Food-safety-related attitudes and behaviors.

This year's study includes a new chapter devoted to the food consumption patterns of the shopping public. This chapter examines:

- Foods frequently served;
- The frequency of purchase of certain types of food; and
- Major changes in eating habits.

Special attention is also given in this year's *Trends* to the varying attitudes and shopping practices of differing age groups. One group of particular interest is the baby boom generation. This group is defined in this study as those individuals between the ages of 20 and 39. Although there is no single universal definition for the baby boom period, individuals born between 1946 and 1964 are typically included in this classification. This baby boom generation is compared and contrasted with individuals aged 40 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 and older. The baby boom group has not been oversampled and is thus represented in the total sample in its correct proportion.

A demographic profile of the total sample, with weighted and unweighted percentages, appears in Methodology.

Study Design

The data for this survey are based on telephone interviews with a representative nationwide sample of 1,005 male and female shoppers conducted in January 1985. The sample was controlled to consist of 60 percent female and 40 percent male heads of household and was then weighted to an 80 percent female-20 percent male ratio to maintain comparability with previous studies in the *Trends* series.

A Note on the Tables

Presented directly beneath the title of each table is a description of the base, that is, the group of respondents of whom the question was asked. The exact number of respondents in this base group, either in total or as broken out into subgroups, is provided for all nontrend tables. The percentages shown in each table are calculated on this base number. It should be noted that these percentages may not always add up to 100 percent because of rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses.

For some tables, response categories are presented both separately (e.g., excellent, pretty good) and combined (e.g., excellent or pretty good). In some instances, the separate percentages may not always add up to the combined percentages because of rounding.

For each table, the wording of the question as it was asked this year is provided; any changes in wording from previous years are noted on the table. Generally, the report presents findings broken out by select subgroups of key interest. Additional analyses of subgroups not included in the report, as well as additional copies of the report, may be obtained from the Food Marketing Institute.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following is an overview and summary of the most important findings of *Trends 1985*:

1. *Consumers continue to be optimistic about future economic conditions.* Half of those surveyed feel that the economy will continue expanding at a healthy rate, whereas only one-third feel it will not. This year, one-third of the shopping public expect their personal economic situation to improve. These optimistic expectations are on a par with last year's and thus indicate a continuing high degree of confidence in the economy.

2. *Fewer shoppers this year than last anticipate sharp increases in supermarket prices in the next six months.* Last year 21 percent of shoppers expected supermarket prices to get a good deal more expensive or rise sharply. The corresponding figure for this year is only 11 percent. Shoppers also expect smaller increases this year for housing, restaurants, and gasoline. In fact, one-third of all shoppers expect gasoline prices to get "a little cheaper."

3. *Shoppers continue to expect supermarkets to provide a wide range of services.* The proportion of shoppers who consider each of eleven key services to be the responsibility of supermarkets has increased slightly. Although this figure has not increased substantially for any individual service, seven out of eleven services show a one to four-percentage-point increase.

4. *The two most important considerations in the selection of a supermarket are good prices and a convenient location.* When asked to state their two or three most important considerations, more than four out of 10 shoppers mention these two store attributes. Also important to shoppers is a wide variety of products; 35 percent of shoppers mention this.

5. *The use of economizing measures has declined this year.* The greatest decrease has occurred with respect to the use of price-off coupons. The proportion of shoppers who do this "pretty much every time" they shop has slipped from 39 percent to 30 percent. Looking in the newspaper for grocery specials has also declined from 49 percent to 41 percent. Shoppers also report less frequent comparison shopping and shopping at nonprincipal stores.

6. *However, the use of time-saving techniques has increased somewhat this year.* Shoppers report more frequent usage of seven out of nine time-saving techniques. The single largest increase has occurred for the practice of shopping at a store because of its fast checkout system. The percentage of shoppers who report doing this pretty much every time they shop has risen from 24 percent to 29 percent.

7. *Weekly grocery expenditures show modest increases this year both on a per-family and on a per-person basis.* The average weekly expenditure per family this year is $61, up from $59 last year. This translates into a $24-a-week per-person expenditure, as compared with $23 a week last year.

8. *Shoppers report making about the same number of store visits per week but shop at fewer stores.* This year, the average number of visits per week held steady at 2.3. However, consistent with their reporting of less comparison shopping, shoppers report visiting 1.5 different stores a week as compared with last year's 1.6 figure. Of the four age groups examined, baby boom shoppers make the most visits per week (2.4), while shoppers age 65 or older make the fewest (2.0).

9. *Baby boom shoppers more often shop during the early evening, whereas older shoppers are more likely to prefer the morning or afternoon.* Thirty-nine percent of baby boom shoppers say they do their shopping in the early evening, as compared with only seven percent of shoppers aged 65 or older.

10. *Supermarkets have gained ground this year with respect to being the usual place to shop for various food items.* When shopping for eight out of ten items asked about, more shoppers this year than last report that they usually go to a supermarket. For seafood this proportion has increased from 53 percent to 64 percent.

11. *Overall, general consumer activism and supermarket-related activism have declined this year.* Consumers are less likely to refuse to buy products that cost too much, write letters to members of Congress, and join consumer boycotts. Also, fewer shoppers have returned products to a supermarket, made an in-person complaint, or switched supermarkets.

12. *Shoppers are slightly less concerned about nutrition this year.* Last year 63 percent of all shoppers said they were very concerned about nutrition. This year's figure is 59 percent. Among those shoppers who are at all concerned about nutrition, specific concerns have also declined, with mentions of chemical additives dropping from 25 percent to 18 percent and concerns about preservatives dropping from 17 percent to 13 percent.

13. *Consumers report relying more on federal and state government to ensure product safety.* Even though shoppers continue to closely identify with activities such as checking food packaging and dates on food, they report less reliance on themselves to ensure food safety. Last year 48 percent said they relied mostly on themselves. This year only 38 percent say they do, but this response is still the most common. However, reliance on the federal and state governments has increased from 22 percent to 31 percent and from three percent to six percent, respectively.

14. *A minority of shoppers has heard of the technique of irradiation, which is a food preservation process.* Just under three out of 10 shoppers say they have heard of this technique. Those shoppers who are familiar with irradiation prefer it over the use of chemical preservatives (39 percent vs. 24 percent), while those unfamiliar are less likely to have a preference but slightly prefer chemical preservatives (28 percent vs. 22 percent).

15. *Beef and poultry are most often cited as favorite main course items.* However, a large portion of shoppers (41 percent) do not have a favorite item. Among those who do report a favorite, the primary reasons cited for these preferences are taste (41 percent), ease of preparation (27 percent), nutrition (23 percent), and economy (20 percent).

16. *The types of foods shoppers purchase suggest that they are both convenience-oriented and economy-oriented.* Over half (54 percent) of all shoppers regularly or occasionally buy delicatessen or other carryout food items, but 51 percent also purchase unbranded or generic products with the same frequency. Shoppers also frequently purchase gourmet or specialty foods (45 percent), unpackaged or bulk foods (43 percent), and salad bar items (36 percent). Least frequently purchased are foods designed for microwave cooking (28 percent).

17. *Shoppers report a variety of changes in their household eating habits in the past year, with nine percent saying they have reduced their intake of meats and nine percent saying they consume more vegetables.* Changes mentioned by smaller numbers of shoppers include eating less (seven percent), eating more (five percent), eating more fruit (five percent), and using less sugar (five percent). Better than four in 10 (44 percent) say they have had no major changes in the past year.

CHAPTER 1

THE GENERAL OUTLOOK

The Economy and Future Expectations

The U.S. economic outlook in 1984 continued to be optimistic although it would be difficult to surpass the improvements experienced in 1983. Major economic indicators remain strong with the gross national product (GNP) increasing by approximately $100 billion over last year. Inflation in 1984 also remained quite low at 4.3 percent, although slightly higher than 1983's 3.2 percent. Unemployment actually declined slightly from last year's 8.0 percent figure to 7.4 percent. This level of employment is the highest in five years. Lending rates, however, increased slightly from last year's 10.8 percent figure to 12.0 percent.

The continuing strength of the American economy is reflected in public attitudes. In May of 1984, the most recent time the question was asked, 51 percent of the American public felt that the economy would expand at a healthy rate, whereas only 33 percent felt it would not. This 18-percentage-point spread in favor of the optimistic viewpoint indicates an unusually high degree of public confidence.

With respect to interest rates, the attitude of the American public has become increasingly sober over the past four years. In late 1983, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of the American public continued to believe that interest rates would come down sharply over the next year. However, by May of 1984, this percentage had dropped to 17 percent. This decrease in public expectations may well be a result of the fact that interest rates bottomed out in 1983 and began to creep upward in 1984.

Table 1 **Public Expectations Concerning the Economy: 1981-1984**

Base: The total public*

Q.: A year from now...do you feel that the economy will be expanding at a healthy rate or not?

	Total			
	Dec. 1981	Nov. 1982	Dec. 1983	May 1984
	%	%	%	%
Will happen	38	43	49	51
Will not happen	53	51	41	33
Not sure	9	6	10	16

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Gross National Product**	$15.1	$14.9	$15.4	$16.4
Inflation***	10.4%	6.1%	3.2%	4.3%
Unemployment****	8.6%	10.4%	8.0%	7.4%

*Data presented are from The Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

**Gross national product is listed in hundreds of billions, constant 1972 dollars.

***Inflation is as measured by the consumer price index.

****Unemployment figures are from January of the succeeding year, e.g., 8.6% is the reading taken in January 1982.

Table 2 **Public Expectations Concerning Interest Rates: 1981-1984**

Base: The total public*

Q.: A year from now...do you feel that interest rates will have come down sharply or not?

	Total			
	Dec. 1981	Nov. 1982	Dec. 1983	May 1984
	%	%	%	%
Will happen	40	43	24	17
Will not happen	53	51	69	71
Not sure	7	6	7	12

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Prime rate	15.3%	14.8%	10.8%	12.0%

*Data presented are from the Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

The American public appears to recognize that the economic conditions of 1985 are positive. At the time of this year's survey, the proportion of shoppers expecting their personal economic situation to improve in the next year was one out of three (33 percent), while 14 percent expected their situation to get worse, and just under half (46 percent) expected their situation to stay the same. These figures are, for all intents and purposes, identical to those of last year. Of course, if one considers that last year's figures indicated a dramatically increased level of optimism from the prior year, the fact that this year's figures have not slipped is a sign of continued optimism.

The degree of optimism expressed by shoppers varies by demographic subgroup. There continues to be a direct relationship between age and the perceived likelihood of improvement in personal economic situation. The most optimistic shoppers are those aged 25 to 39, almost half of whom (45 percent) expect their situation to improve. Level of income is also related to degree of optimism, with 42 percent of the highest income group (with a household income of over $25,000 a year) expecting improvement, compared with 19 percent of the lowest income group ($7,500 or less a year). It is worth noting that this year's gap between income groups (42 percent vs. 19 percent) is wider than last year's (42 percent vs. 29 percent) by 10 percentage points.

From a geographic perspective, shoppers living in the West (40 percent) and in the suburbs (37 percent) are the most optimistic. Those living in the Midwest (29 percent) and in rural areas (28 percent) are the least optimistic.

Table 3 **Expectations for Next Year's Personal Economic Situation: 1977-1985**

Base: The total public and the shopping public*

Q.: Looking at the situation personally, do you think your own economic situation will improve in the next year, get worse, or remain about the same?

	Total							
	Feb. 1977	Feb. 1979	Mar. 1980	Jan. 1981	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	**Jan. 1985**
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve	41	26	24	28	28	26	34	33
Get worse	12	26	29	26	25	23	15	14
Remain about the same	43	45	45	40	43	48	48	46
Not sure	4	3	2	5	4	4	3	6

*Data presented for 1981 through 1985 are from the sample of shoppers used for the *Trends* surveys. All trend data prior to 1981 are from The Harris Survey of national cross sections of the adult public, 18 years of age and older.

Table 4

How Subgroups Compare in Their Expectations for Next Year's Personal Economic Situation

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Looking at the situation personally, do you think your own economic situation will improve in the next year, get worse, or remain about the same?

	Base		Improve	Get Worse	Remain About the Same	Not Sure
Total	**1005**	**%**	**33**	**14**	**46**	**6**
Size of Family						
1	147	%	28	14	44	14
2	345	%	31	16	49	4
3-4	384	%	39	12	45	5
5 and over	126	%	31	18	46	5
Age						
18-24 years	66	%	42	9	41	6
25-39 years	376	%	45	9	43	3
40-49 years	181	%	33	17	47	3
50-64 years	207	%	23	21	50	6
65 and older	153	%	19	18	47	15
Income						
$7,500 or less	102	%	19	27	35	19
$7,501-$15,000	146	%	29	17	46	7
$15,001-$25,000	213	%	35	14	46	4
$25,001 and over	436	%	42	10	48	1
Region						
East	249	%	37	12	48	4
Midwest	253	%	29	12	51	9
South	311	%	31	20	42	6
West	192	%	40	11	45	4
Size of Place						
Central city	303	%	32	15	47	6
Remainder of metropolitan area	464	%	37	12	47	4
Outside metropolitan area	238	%	28	19	44	9
Race						
White	871	%	34	13	47	6
Black	75	%	26	27	40	6
Hispanic	59	%	35	19	40	5

Projected Price Changes

Shoppers indicate this year that they expect far more modest price increases for products than they did last year. Last year almost one-fourth of those surveyed (23 percent) expected housing prices to become a good deal more expensive or rise sharply. The corresponding percentage for this year's study is 19 percent. Shoppers' expectations related to restaurant and gasoline prices are also more positive this year. Last year 10 percent of shoppers said they expected restaurant prices to become a good deal more expensive or rise sharply, and eight percent said they expected gasoline prices to increase in the same manner. The corresponding figures for this year are slightly less — nine percent and five percent, respectively.

However, the most dramatic change in price expectations has occurred with respect to supermarket prices. The proportion of shoppers who expect supermarket prices to become a good deal more expensive or rise sharply this year is only 11 percent. This represents almost a 50 percent decrease from last year's figure of 21 percent.

Table 5 **Price Changes Expected in Next Six Months: 1983-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: What do you personally think will happen to (READ EACH ITEM) in the next six months? Will it get a little cheaper, stay the same, get a little more expensive, get a good deal more expensive, or rise sharply?

		Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985				
		A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply	A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply	A Good Deal More Expensive/ Rise Sharply	A Little More Expensive	Stay the Same	A Little Cheaper	Not Sure
Cost of housing	%	19	23	19	37	26	12	6
Supermarket prices	%	15	21	11	54	26	5	4
Interest rates	%	x	x	10	26	29	29	7
Restaurant prices	%	13	10	9	49	33	3	6
Gasoline prices	%	23	8	5	25	30	33	7

x = Not previously asked.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONSUMER'S VIEW OF THE SUPERMARKET

Responsibilities of Supermarkets

Shoppers continue to expect a great deal from supermarkets. The eleven services asked about show only minimal changes in the percentage of shoppers who say it is the responsibility of supermarkets. However, it is significant that a rise of from one to four percentage points is seen for seven of the services. This year's results, compared to 1983, show increases for nine out of 11 of the services. From 1983 to 1985, two services, "Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping" and "Helping you save your money with their specials," showed a five-percentage-point increase. Because no dramatic increases or decreases have occurred for individual items, the top three services remain the same this year as last year. Ninety-nine percent of all shoppers feel supermarkets are responsible for "making sure their employees give good service to their customers"; "having readable and accurate shelf tags" is second with 97 percent, and "getting you through checkout quickly" is third with 96 percent.

In general, the proportion of shoppers who consider these services to be the responsibility of supermarkets does not vary greatly by age group. However, younger shoppers, that is, the

Table 6 **How Shoppers in Different Age Groups Compare in Their Views of Supermarket Responsibilities**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Do you feel that supermarkets are responsible for (READ EACH ITEM) or don't you feel that's their job?

			Jan. 1985				
			Age				
	Jan. 1983 Total	Jan. 1984 Total	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Supermarkets Are Responsible for:							
Making sure their employees give good service to their customers	97	98	99	99	99	99	96
Having readable and accurate shelf tags	94	95	97	98	98	98	91
Getting you through checkout quickly	95	96	96	97	97	97	91
Making sure you don't buy old, stale, or spoiled products	91	93	93	95	92	92	87
Making shopping easier and more pleasurable	88	89	90	89	88	92	91
Keeping your favorite products in stock	87	88	90	90	86	93	90
Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping	80	83	85	84	86	85	83
Helping you save your money with their specials	75	76	80	82	76	84	78
Providing you with cheaper house brands or unbranded products	76	76	75	79	65	75	75
Helping you pick the best value for the money	49	49	50	46	49	51	64
Providing nutrition and health information	37	38	36	33	41	40	35

baby boom generation, more often feel that "providing you with cheaper house brands" is the responsibility of supermarkets. On the other hand, this group least often feels that "helping you pick the best value for the money" is a responsibility of supermarkets (46 percent), while shoppers aged 65 or older are most likely to view this as a responsibility (64 percent).

Ratings of Supermarket Services

Overall, shoppers feel that supermarkets are doing an excellent or pretty good job of providing these 11 services. Among shoppers who feel that supermarkets are responsible for each item, ratings of supermarkets are essentially unchanged from last year: for five items ratings have increased slightly, for three items ratings have decreased, and for three items ratings are exactly what they were last year. Compared to 1983, ratings are higher this year for nine of 11 items; last year eight of 11 items showed improvement over 1983.

The single most dramatic change in rating from last year to this year has occurred for the provision of nutrition and health information. Last year 78 percent of shoppers who considered this service to be the responsibility of supermarkets felt that supermarkets did an excellent or pretty good job of providing this information. This year's rating has dropped six percentage points to 72 percent.

The second largest change relates to the service of getting customers through checkout quickly. Supermarkets' performance rating for this service has increased four percentage points this year, from 79 percent to 83 percent. This increase is probably more important than the six-percentage-point decrease on providing nutrition and health information for two reasons. First, fast checkout ranks third on the list of services for which shoppers feel supermarkets are responsible, whereas the provision of nutrition and health information ranks eleventh or last. Second, this year's 72 percent rating for the provision of nutrition and health information is still two percentage points higher than in 1983. The item for which the greatest percentage of shoppers feel supermarkets are responsible — "making sure their employees give good service" — also shows a modest gain this year of two percentage points (from 92 percent to 94 percent).

Consumer ratings of these eleven services vary more as a function of age group than does the actual importance of these services. In this regard it would appear that shoppers of the baby boom generation are less satisfied than their older counterparts. For seven of the 11 services baby boom shoppers who feel supermarkets are responsible for each item give supermarkets lower than average ratings.

Two items are rated substantially below the average by baby boomers. These are "providing nutrition and health information" (63 percent vs. an average of 72 percent) and "helping you pick the best value for the money" (81 percent vs. an average of 89 percent). These two items are also the items least often considered the responsibility of supermarkets by this age group.

The most satisfied shoppers appear to be those aged 65 or older. This group gives supermarkets above-average ratings for eight of the 11 services.

Table 7

How Shoppers in Different Age Groups Rate Supermarket Service

Base: Those in the shopping public who feel supermarkets are responsible for each item

Q.: Do you feel that the supermarket in which you usually shop does an excellent, pretty good, not very good, or poor job of (READ EACH ITEM)?

			Jan. 1985				
				Age			
	Jan. 1983 Total	Jan. 1984 Total	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Supermarkets Do an Excellent or Pretty Good Job of:							
Helping you by having a wide variety of items for one-stop shopping	92	95	94	93	93	92	98
Making shopping easier and more pleasurable	91	93	94	93	92	94	97
Making sure their employees give good service to their customers	90	92	94	93	91	95	97
Keeping your favorite products in stock	92	92	92	92	94	88	96
Helping you save your money with their specials	88	91	92	93	91	91	93
Making sure you don't buy old, stale, or spoiled products	90	90	90	90	88	93	88
Providing you with cheaper house brands or unbranded products	86	89	89	92	90	86	87
Helping you pick the best value for the money	86	88	89	81	93	90	96
Having readable and accurate shelf tags	81	84	83	81	86	82	82
Getting you through checkout quickly	80	79	83	79	82	85	88
Providing nutrition and health information	70	78	72	63	76	73	89

Considerations in the Selection of Supermarkets

This year's *Trends* asked shoppers to volunteer the two or three most important considerations in the selection of the supermarket in which they usually shop. The two factors considered by better than four out of 10 shoppers are low prices (43 percent) and close location (42 percent). Another key consideration is a variety and wide selection of products. Over one-third of all shoppers (35 percent) mentioned this. Shoppers also expect stores to have courteous, friendly employees (25 percent) and to be clean (23 percent).

Regardless of age group, price and location are the two most often mentioned considerations. However, for baby boom shoppers these considerations are more often mentioned than for any of the three other age groups examined. Over half (54 percent) of baby boomers said good prices was an important consideration as compared to 39 percent of shoppers aged 40 to 49, 37 percent of shoppers aged 50 to 64, and only 27 percent of shoppers aged 65 or older. Baby boom shoppers also more frequently mention location as a consideration (46 percent) than do older shoppers: 40 percent of 40- to 49-year-olds, 36 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds, and 38 percent of the oldest age group. Mentions related to wide variety and selection also decline with age. In short, it would appear that younger shoppers consider more factors when selecting a supermarket; that is, they are more demanding than older shoppers.

Table 8 **The Most Important Features of Supermarkets (Volunteered)**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: (1985) Thinking about the supermarket in which you usually shop, what were the two or three most important considerations when selecting this supermarket as your principal store to shop at? What else?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	418	184	213	159
	%	%	%	%	%
Good/low prices	43	54	39	37	27
Location/close to home/local	42	46	40	36	38
Variety, wide selection	35	43	36	30	18
Courteous, friendly employees	25	22	29	27	22
Clean store	23	22	24	30	18
Fast checkout	13	14	14	13	8
Fresh produce/fruits and vegetables	13	10	16	18	11
Good/better/fresh meat	12	11	15	16	7
Good service	11	11	11	12	11
Items on sale, money-saving specials	11	12	11	11	8
Quality products	8	7	13	9	6
Convenient layout of store	7	6	7	8	12
Keep shelves well-stocked	4	3	3	5	4
Convenience (nonspecific)	4	3	2	4	6
Familiarity	4	2	4	5	7
Fresh products	3	3	3	3	5
Better store hours, longer hours	3	5	3	1	-
Convenient parking	3	1	2	6	4
Nice appearance	3	2	5	3	3
One-stop shopping	3	3	4	1	3
Items clearly marked for price	2	2	2	*	4
Grocery carryout service	2	1	2	4	4
Check cashing	2	1	1	3	3
Wide aisles	2	2	2	5	2
Coupons	2	2	2	2	3
No old, stale products	1	1	1	1	-
Have advertised items in stock	1	*	1	*	-
Generic/unbranded products	1	*	1	1	-

*Less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 3

SAVING TIME AND MONEY

Frequency of Economizing

This year's *Trends* reveals a consistent pattern of less frequent usage of economizing measures. For each of the four economizing measures asked about, shoppers indicate a lower rate of usage than was recorded in 1984. Moreover, last year's results indicated a decline in usage from 1983 for three of the four items. Thus, this year's study findings represent a continued and perhaps accelerated decline in the use of economizing measures.

The mechanism most commonly used by shoppers to save money is looking in the newspapers for grocery specials. Four out of 10 (41 percent) shoppers surveyed this year indicate that they do this "pretty much every time" they shop. Although this practice is still fairly common, last year 49 percent and in 1983, 52 percent of all shoppers utilized this technique that often. Thus, frequent looking for grocery specials has declined by 11 percentage points in two years.

The second most common economizing measure taken by shoppers is the use of price-off coupons. However, this practice has dropped by nine percentage points since last year. Whereas last year and in 1983 almost four out of 10 shoppers (39 percent and 38 percent, respectively) used coupons pretty much every time they shopped, only three out of 10 report the use of coupons that frequently this year.

Comparing prices at different supermarkets is a strategy less often utilized by shoppers. This year 27 percent of shoppers indicate that they do this pretty much every time they shop — a two-percentage-point drop since last year and a three-percentage-point drop since 1983. Shopping at supermarkets other than their principal one to take advantage of advertised specials is the least common economizing practice among shoppers. For this measure as well, fewer shoppers this year report doing this pretty much every time they shop: 10 percent in 1985, compared with 12 percent in 1984 and 13 percent in 1983.

The pattern of usage of these economizing strategies differs dramatically between men and women and between working and nonworking women. Generally, men are the least likely to use these money-saving strategies, while nonworking women are the most likely. Just under one-third (32 percent) of males report looking in the newspapers for grocery specials pretty much every time they shop. This compares with 38 percent of working women and just over half (51 percent) of nonworking women. A similar pattern emerges with respect to the use of price-off coupons. One-fourth of male shoppers use coupons pretty much every time they shop, but this percentage increases to 28 percent among working women and 35 percent among nonworking women.

Table 9 **How Often Shoppers Use Supermarket Specials, Coupons, and Price Comparisons**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

		1983	1984	1985				
		Pretty Much Every Time	Pretty Much Every Time	Pretty Much Every Time	Fairly Often	Only Occasionally	Never	Not Sure
Look in the newspaper for grocery specials	%	52	49	41	19	21	18	1
Use price-off coupons	%	38	39	30	19	37	13	*
Compare prices at different supermarkets	%	30	29	27	20	35	17	1
Go to supermarkets other than your principal one for advertised specials	%	13	12	10	20	49	21	*

*Less than 0.5%.

Although the use of these techniques has declined this year, the relative frequency of use by region of the country has remained basically unchanged. Easterners most often look in the newspaper for specials and also are the most frequent users of coupons. Midwesterners and Southerners are slightly more likely to compare prices at different supermarkets and to shop at nonprincipal stores for advertised specials. As was the case last year, Westerners are the least frequent users of these economizing measures.

Table 10 **How Subgroups and Shoppers in Different Locations Vary in Their Use of Supermarket Specials, Coupons, and Price Comparisons**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

					Region			
	Total	Men	Working Women	Non-working Women	East	Mid-west	South	West
Base	1005	406	339	251	249	253	311	192
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pretty Much Every Time:								
Look in the newspaper for grocery specials	41	32	38	51	46	45	40	31
Use price-off coupons	30	25	28	35	43	33	22	22
Compare prices at different supermarkets	27	23	25	34	27	29	29	22
Go to supermarkets other than your principal one for advertised specials	10	9	8	13	9	10	11	7

Saving Time in the Supermarket

Although there is less use of economizing techniques this year than last, shoppers seem to be slightly more likely to practice time-saving techniques. Of the nine time-saving strategies asked about, shoppers report modest increases in frequency of use for all but two.

The most common strategies this year are the same as those reported last year, with the following four being used by at least three out of 10 shoppers pretty much every time they shop:

- Taking packaged meat available rather than asking for a different cut (37 percent);
- Looking only at the items you know you need (34 percent);
- Buying larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping (31 percent); and
- Going to the supermarket at a particular time of day to avoid crowds (31 percent).

From 1983 to the present, the strategy that has increased most is shopping at a particular supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system. In 1983, 23 percent of shoppers did this pretty much every time they shopped. The percent last year was 24 percent, and this year 29 percent frequently use this time-saving technique. Taking packaged meat available rather than asking for a different cut has also increased from 33 percent in 1983 to 37 percent this year, although in 1984 this percent (38 percent) was essentially the same as this year. One other strategy that has shown a modest but consistent increase is the practice of buying larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping. This year 31 percent of shoppers report doing this pretty much every time they shop as compared to 30 percent last year and 28 percent in 1983.

Table 11 **How Shoppers Save Time in the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: People do different things to save time when shopping. For each of the following, please tell me how often you personally do this to save time when grocery shopping. Do you (READ EACH ITEM) pretty much every time you shop, fairly often, only occasionally, or never?

		1983	1984	1985					
		Pretty Much Every Time	Pretty Much Every Time	Pretty Much Every Time	Fairly Often	Only Occasionally	Never	Doesn't Apply (Volunteered)	Not Sure
Take packaged meat available rather than ask for a different cut	%	33	38	37	17	29	13	3	-
Look only at the items you know you need	%	36	33	34	32	25	8	*	*
Buy larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping	%	28	30	31	29	28	11	1	*
Go to the supermarket at a particular time of day to avoid crowds	%	30	28	31	22	25	20	2	*
Shop at a particular supermarket because it has a better or faster checkout system	%	23	24	29	20	21	26	3	1
Shop at a particular supermarket because it's less crowded	%	15	15	17	15	30	34	4	1
Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find	%	12	10	13	18	41	26	1	1
Buy only enough to use the quick checkout line	%	5	5	6	8	49	35	2	1
Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket	%	3	4	3	7	51	37	1	*

*Less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 4

SHOPPING PATTERNS

The Weekly Grocery Bill

Last year's *Trends* found a modest decline in the average weekly grocery expenses of shoppers, dropping to $59 per household from $60 in 1983. This year's figure of $61 per family per week represents a slight increase over the prior two years' averages.

On a per-person basis, reported weekly grocery expenditures have increased modestly but consistently since 1982. In 1982, the weekly expenditure per person was $21. This figure has increased by one dollar each year so that this year the weekly cost for groceries averages $24 a person.

Single-person households ($40) and two-person households ($29) report above-average weekly per-person expenditures. However, these smaller-than-average households have managed to hold the line on grocery expenditures and report the same level of expenditures as they did last year.

Regionally, shoppers in the West report the highest per-person expenditures ($26), followed by Easterners ($25). Both of these regions' average expenditures increased by two dollars over last year. In contrast, shoppers in the Midwest report the lowest level of expenditure, $21, which is actually one dollar less than last year's figure.

Table 12 **Family Weekly Grocery Expenses: 1982-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how much do you spend each week on groceries for your family?

	Total			
	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	**Jan. 1985**
	%	%	%	%
$0-$40	30	28	23	23
$41-$60	25	29	29	27
$61-$100	30	33	34	34
$101 and over	8	9	9	12
Not sure/no answer	7	1	4	4
Average weekly grocery expenses	$58	$60	$59	$61

Table 13 **Average Per-Person Weekly Grocery Expenses: 1982-1985**

Base: The shopping public

	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985
Total	**$21**	**$22**	**$23**	**$24**
Principal Shoppers				
Men	$23	$23	$28	$28
Women	$21	$22	$22	$23
Married				
One spouse at home	$20	$20	$22	$23
Two wage earners	$22	$22	$23	$23
Size of Family				
1	$33	$33	$40	$40
2	$26	$27	$29	$29
3-4	$20	$21	$22	$23
5 and over	$17	$16	$15	$17
Type of Family				
With children	$19	$19	$19	$21
No children	$25	$28	$28	$29
Region				
East	$23	$22	$23	$25
Midwest	$20	$20	$22	$21
South	$20	$24	$23	$24
West	$23	$24	$24	$26
Size of Place				
Central city	$21	$22	$24	$24
Remainder of metropolitan area	$23	$23	$24	$25
Outside metropolitan area	$20	$22	$21	$21

Weekly Supermarket Visits

This year's *Trends* suggests a very slight reduction in the number of supermarkets visited each week. Last year, 51 percent of all shoppers reported visiting only one store a week. This percentage has risen to 56 percent this year, resulting in an overall average of 1.5 supermarkets visited per week, down from 1.6 last year.

This slight reduction in number of stores visited is consistent with the data earlier in this report showing reduced economizing through multi-store shopping and buying larger quantities to avoid frequent shopping.

This finding also appears to be quite consistent across age groups. Baby boom shoppers shop at no more stores than do shoppers aged 40 to 49 (an average of 1.5 stores per week). Shoppers between the ages of 50 and 64 and those 65 and over indicate a very slight tendency to shop at more stores (1.6 stores per week).

Table 14 **Number of Different Supermarkets Shoppers Use: 1982-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many different supermarkets do you usually visit in a week to do your weekly shopping?

	Total			
	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	**Jan. 1985**
	%	%	%	%
1	56	50	51	56
2	34	37	37	35
3	8	11	9	7
4 or more	1	2	1	2
Average number of different supermarkets visited per week	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5

Table 15 **Number of Different Supermarkets Shoppers Use**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many different supermarkets do you usually visit in a week to do your weekly shopping?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
Number of Supermarkets					
1	56	57	55	53	57
2	35	35	38	36	30
3	7	6	7	10	8
4 or more	2	2	-	1	3
Average number of different supermarkets visited per week	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6

This year slightly fewer shoppers report making only one trip a week: 29 percent versus 31 percent last year. The proportion of shoppers reporting two trips a week has increased from 31 percent to 32 percent, and the proportion reporting six or more trips a week has risen from three percent to four percent. Despite these modest changes in percentages, however, the average number of trips per week remains unchanged from last year's 2.3 figure.

Although the number of stores shopped at is quite consistent across age groups, there are fairly substantial differences in the average number of shopping trips per week by age group. Both baby boom shoppers and shoppers aged 40 to 49 report an average of 2.4 trips per week. Shoppers 50 to 64 years old report fewer trips (2.3 per week), and shoppers 65 and older report far fewer trips: 2.0 trips per week.

Table 16 **How Often Shoppers Go to the Supermarket in an Average Week: 1982-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many visits do you make to the supermarket in an average week — that includes going to the same store more than once and going to different stores?

	Total			
	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985
	%	%	%	%
1	31	31	31	29
2	32	34	31	32
3	20	20	20	20
4	7	8	8	9
5	3	3	4	4
6 or more	3	3	3	4
Every 2 weeks	1	*	2	2
Average number of visits to the supermarket per week	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3

*Less than 0.5%.

Table 17 **How Often Shoppers Go to the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: About how many visits do you make to the supermarket in an average week — that includes going to the same store more than once and going to different stores?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Number of Visits					
1	29	26	28	29	40
2	32	33	30	30	30
3	20	21	22	23	16
4	9	8	10	9	6
5	4	4	5	5	1
6 or more	4	6	3	2	3
Every 2 weeks	2	2	1	1	3
Average number of visits to supermarket per week	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.0

Shopping Hours

The time of day when most consumers shop has remained quite consistent over the past four years, with the favorite shopping times divided fairly evenly between morning (27 percent), afternoon (24 percent), and early evening (28 percent). If there is any trend at all it may be that shoppers are beginning to favor early evening shopping over afternoon shopping. However, the differences over the past four years are slight, and next year's study may help to reveal whether, in fact, this is a trend.

Table 18 **Time of Day Shoppers Usually Go to Supermarkets: 1982-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: At what time of day do you *usually* go — in the morning, around noon, in the afternoon, early evening, or late evening?

	Total			
	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985
	%	%	%	%
Morning	27	27	26	27
Noon	6	6	7	6
Afternoon	28	27	24	24
Early evening	26	23	26	28
Late evening	6	8	8	6
No special time (volunteered)	8	9	9	9

There are marked differences in time-of-day preferences by age group. Baby boom shoppers are far more likely to shop in the early evening and to a lesser extent in the late evening than are the other three age groups examined. Almost half (48 percent) of this group report shopping in the evening as compared with 36 percent of 40- to 49-year-olds, 27 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds, and only seven percent of shoppers over the age of 64. The last group, shoppers aged 65 and older, are more likely than other groups to shop in the morning. Four out of 10 of these oldest shoppers shop in the morning, in contrast to three out of 10 shoppers for the two younger age groups and only two out of 10 baby boom shoppers.

Table 19 **How Shoppers Vary in the Time of Day They Usually Go to the Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: And, what time of day do you *usually* go — in the morning, around noon, in the afternoon, early evening, or late evening?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Morning	27	21	30	30	40
Noon	6	5	8	6	10
Afternoon	24	22	17	26	28
Early evening	28	39	28	22	7
Late evening	6	9	8	5	-
No special time (volunteer)	9	5	9	11	16

Shopping: Day-of-Week Preferences

Almost half (48 percent) of all shoppers express no preference for a particular day on which to shop. Fridays and Saturdays are the most often mentioned days, each cited by 13 percent of shoppers. There is a slight change from last year in that Thursdays are less preferred this year (10 percent vs. 14 percent) and Sundays are more preferred (four percent vs. one percent). Although the study did not investigate the issue, this low level of Sunday shopping may be due to not all supermarkets being open. The most striking difference across the four age groups is that shoppers aged 65 and older are less likely to shop during the weekend (five percent) than are younger shoppers (19 percent).

Table 20 **Day of Week Shoppers Usually Go to Supermarket**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: On what day of the week do you do most of your food shopping — or isn't there any special day?

		1985				
			Age			
	1984 Total	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Monday	3	2	2	3	*	1
Tuesday	5	4	4	2	4	4
Wednesday	6	6	6	5	9	4
Thursday	14	10	8	8	13	19
Friday	13	13	13	13	12	17
Saturday	12	13	13	17	15	4
Sunday	1	4	6	2	4	1
No special day	46	48	48	51	42	50
Not sure	*	*	-	-	*	-

*Less than 0.5%.

Supermarkets vs. Other Stores

This year's *Trends* indicates that one of the important considerations for shoppers in selecting a supermarket continues to be a wide variety of products to choose from. This finding is supported by the proportion of shoppers who report usually shopping at supermarkets for various types of food and other products. For eight out of ten items asked about both last year and this year, supermarkets show an increase in the proportion of shoppers buying these items from them. In 1982, only six items were included in this question; however, for four of these six items shoppers now more often shop in supermarkets for them.

The single largest increase has occurred for fresh seafood. Last year slightly over half of all shoppers (53 percent) reported supermarkets as the usual place of purchase for this item. This percentage has increased to 64 percent this year. Supermarkets have also gained ground in the area of bakery goods, with a four-percentage-point increase from last year (75 percent vs. 71 percent). Flowers and plants showed a three-percentage-point gain, increasing from 23 percent to 26 percent. The only item on which supermarkets lost ground was household repair and houseware items, dropping to 13 percent from last year's 15 percent. However, this is still higher than in 1982, when only 10 percent of shoppers usually purchased these items in supermarkets. Magazines regained the share lost in 1984, increasing to 38 percent from 35 percent last year and 37 percent in 1982. Paper goods, while not returning to the 61 percent figure of 1982, have improved somewhat (57 percent) over last year (55 percent).

The two product categories least likely to be purchased at supermarkets are prescription drugs (six percent) and toys (two percent). For prescription drugs there has been no change since last year. This was the first year that toys were included as a product category.

Table 21 **Where Consumers Usually Shop for Various Items**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Please tell me where you would usually shop for each of the following items — a supermarket, a convenience store, an all-purpose drugstore, or a discount department store?

		1982	1984	1985					
		Super-market	Super-market	Super-market	Convenience Store	Drug-store	Discount Store	Don't Shop	Other
Bakery goods	%	x	71	75	2	*	1	4	18
Fresh seafood	%	x	53	64	2	*	*	12	20
Paper goods	%	61	55	57	3	11	23	*	3
Magazines	%	37	35	38	5	21	9	14	11
Nonprescription drugs	%	x	29	30	1	52	14	1	1
Flowers and plants	%	x	23	26	4	2	26	8	33
Health and beauty aids	%	23	21	23	2	44	24	2	4
Household repair and houseware items	%	10	15	13	5	4	57	1	20
Greeting cards	%	12	13	15	5	37	23	1	17
Prescription drugs	%	4	6	6	*	84	5	1	3
Toys	%	x	x	2	3	3	70	9	12

x = Not asked in 1982 or 1984.

*Less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 5

CONSUMER ACTIVISM

General Consumer Activism

This year shows a generally reduced willingness on the part of consumers to take action. While refusing to buy products that cost too much continues to be the most common of the four activities asked about, this year only three out of four consumers (75 percent) report that this is something they have already done or are ready to do. This represents a four-percentage-point decrease from last year and an 11-percentage-point decrease from 1980. Writing letters to members of Congress has slipped this year as well to 40 percent from last year's 42 percent. This represents a remarkable decline from 1980, when almost two-thirds of consumers (65 percent) reported that this was something that they had already done or were ready to do. Joining organized boycotts has become even more rare than it was last year. Last year one in four consumers reported that they were at least ready to do this, compared with only one in five this year. The one activity that shows an increase this year is getting neighbors to sign petitions. The percentage of consumers ready to participate in this activity has risen to 32 percent from 27 percent last year.

Table 22 **Consumers' Views on Taking Different Actions on Their Complaints**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How do you personally feel about (READ EACH ITEM)? Is this something you already have done; something you are ready to do; something you can sympathize with but wouldn't do; or something you think is ineffective, wrong, or illegal?

Base: 1005		Already Have Done	Ready to Do	Sympathize With but Wouldn't Do	Ineffective, Wrong, or Illegal	Not Sure
Refusing to buy products which cost too much	%	68	6	14	6	5
Writing letters to your congressman demanding that the government do something	%	20	19	41	16	4
Getting neighbors to sign petitions	%	16	16	48	14	6
Joining organized consumer boycotts against particular products or stores	%	8	12	51	23	6

Table 23 **Actions That Consumers Are Willing to Take: 1980-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How do you personally feel about (READ EACH ITEM)? Is this something you already have done; something you are ready to do; something you can sympathize with but wouldn't do; or something you think is ineffective, wrong, or illegal?

	Total					
	Feb. 1980	Jan. 1981	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	Jan. 1985
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Already Have Done or Ready to Do:						
Refusing to buy products which cost too much	86	80	85	77	79	75
Writing letters to your congressman demanding that the government do something	65	50	45	42	42	40
Getting neighbors to sign petitions	50	33	33	30	27	32
Joining organized consumer boycotts against particular products or stores	36	27	27	23	25	20

Supermarket-Related Activity

This year's *Trends* also shows a consistent reduction in the proportion of shoppers who have taken actions related to dissatisfaction with supermarkets. For each of the six items asked about, fewer shoppers report having taken the action this year than last year.

While returning products to a supermarket for a refund or exchange continues to be the most common of the six practices, only 51 percent of shoppers say they have done this, compared with 56 percent last year. In-person complaints also show a marked decline from 35 percent last year to 30 percent this year.

Switching supermarkets because of dissatisfaction and telling friends or neighbors not to use a store both have declined this year by four percentage points from 24 percent to 20 percent and 14 percent to 10 percent, respectively.

Writing complaint letters and joining food co-ops continue to be very rare consumer practices, with eight percent and three percent of shoppers reporting these two activities this year. Each of these activities has declined by one percentage point this year.

Table 24 **Actions Shoppers Have Taken on Supermarket-Related Complaints: 1981-1985**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: In the past year, have you (READ EACH ITEM) or not?

	Total				
	Jan. 1981	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1984	**Jan. 1985**
Base: 1005	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, Have:					
Returned products to a supermarket for a refund or exchange	57	53	52	56	51
Made an in-person complaint to a food store or supermarket manager	41	33	32	35	30
Switched supermarkets because you were dissatisfied	34	22	21	24	20
Told a friend or neighbor to stop going to a particular store or supermarket	22	13	12	14	10
Written a letter of complaint to a food manufacturer or supermarket	8	7	6	9	8
Joined a food co-op in your area	4	2	3	4	3

CHAPTER 6

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT AND FOOD AND PRODUCT SAFETY

Nutritional Content

Concern about nutritional content of foods appears to have declined modestly from last year to this year. Last year 63 percent of shoppers stated that they were very concerned about the nutritional content of what they eat, whereas this year 59 percent express this level of concern. While almost a third (32 percent) of all shoppers are somewhat concerned about nutrition — the same figure as last year — the proportion of shoppers who are not very or not at all concerned has doubled from last year's four percent figure to eight percent this year. This decline in concern about nutrition may have begun in 1983 since the proportion of very concerned shoppers dropped from 64 percent at the beginning of 1983 to 63 percent last year.

Although men and women expressed essentially the same degree of concern last year (62 percent and 64 percent, very concerned), there has been a dramatic reduction in the proportion of male shoppers who are very concerned about nutrition to 51 percent. Female shoppers' level of concern has also declined but less dramatically to 60 percent.

Substantial changes have also occurred for several other subpopulations. Urban shoppers' degree of concern has declined from 71 percent to 61 percent, bringing this group almost into line with suburban shoppers (60 percent) but still leaving them more concerned than rural shoppers (53 percent).

Over the course of the past two years nutritional concerns have declined for four of five age groups. This year only 40- to 49-year-olds report a higher level of concern (63 percent) than in 1983 (61 percent). The two youngest age groups, 18 to 24 and 25- to 39-year-olds, showed significant declines from 1983 to 1984 (61 percent to 51 percent and 64 percent to 58 percent, respectively). In contrast, the two oldest age groups, 50 to 64 and 65 or older, showed substantially reduced concerns from 1984 to this year (71 percent to 62 percent and 67 percent to 58 percent respectively).

Over the past two years all four regions have declined in their concern about nutrition. The most impressive decline has occurred for Westerners, who have dropped from 69 percent being very concerned in 1983 to 57 percent this year. Southerners have also shown a consistent decline but of lesser magnitude: 66 percent in 1983, 62 percent in 1984, and 59 percent this year.

Table 25 **Level of Shoppers' Concern About the Nutritional Content of Foods**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Would you say you and your family are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned about the nutritional content of what you eat?

		1983	1984	1985			
		Very Concerned	Very Concerned	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Very/ Not at All Concerned	Not Sure
Total	%	**64**	**63**	**59**	**32**	**8**	**1**
Sex							
Men	%	62	62	51	36	11	1
Women	%	65	64	60	31	8	1
Working	%	63	64	60	32	8	*
Nonworking	%	68	63	62	29	8	2
Type of Family							
With children	%	65	62	62	33	5	1
No children	%	63	64	56	31	12	1
Age							
18-24 years	%	61	51	52	41	8	-
25-39 years	%	64	58	56	38	7	-
40-49 years	%	61	67	63	30	5	2
50-64 years	%	68	71	62	24	12	1
65 and over	%	65	67	58	26	13	3
Size of Place							
Central city	%	71	71	61	30	9	*
Remainder of metropolitan area	%	64	61	60	32	8	*
Outside metropolitan area	%	61	58	53	35	8	3
Region							
East	%	67	66	65	28	7	*
Midwest	%	56	63	53	37	9	*
South	%	66	62	59	29	9	2
West	%	69	59	57	34	8	-

*Less than 0.5%.

Among those shoppers who are at all concerned about the nutritional content of what they eat, the number of specific concerns has declined. The most often mentioned concerns last year and in 1983 related to chemical additives. The percentage of shoppers mentioning this type of concern has dropped from 27 percent in 1983, to 25 percent last year and to 18 percent this year.

Other frequently mentioned concerns have dropped over the past two years. Mentions of the vitamin and mineral content of food have declined from 24 percent to 17 percent; preservative concerns have declined from 22 percent to 13 percent, freshness concerns from 14 percent to 8 percent, and concerns about foods being "natural" from 12 percent to five percent. On the other hand, concerns about fat content have picked up from nine percent in 1983 to 13 percent this year and cholesterol-related mentions have increased from five percent to 10 percent.

Concerns about sugar content and salt content have remained fairly stable with percent mentions of about 20 percent and 19 percent, respectively. However, because of the less frequent mention of other concerns these two concerns are now the first and second most often mentioned by shoppers.

Table 26

Nature of Shoppers' Concern About the Nutritional Content of Foods (Volunteered)

Base: Those in the shopping public who are very, somewhat, or not very concerned about the nutritional content of what they eat

Q.: What is it about the nutritional content of what you eat that concerns you and your family the most? What else?

	1983 Total	1984 Total	1985 Total
	%	%	%
Sugar content, less sugar	21	22	20
Salt content, less salt	18	17	19
Chemical additives (e.g., flavoring, MSG, steroids)	27	25	18
Vitamin/mineral content	24	19	17
Food/nutritional value	10	19	14
No preservatives	22	17	13
Fat content, low in fat	9	8	13
Making sure we get a balanced diet	10	9	11
Cholesterol levels	5	8	10
Calories, low calories	6	9	9
Freshness, purity, no spoilage	14	12	8
As natural as possible, not overly processed	12	6	5
No harmful ingredients, nothing that causes illness/cancer	10	6	5
Empty calories, junk food	4	4	5
Protein value	5	6	4
Excess food coloring/dyes	6	4	3
Desire to be healthy/eat what's good for us	-	-	3
Carbohydrate content	1	2	2
Fiber content	2	1	2
Less red meat	-	-	2
Artificial sweetener	-	-	2
Quality of food	3	5	1
Starch content	1	1	1
Other	2	4	1
Don't know/refused	5	5	6

Consumer Behavior and Food Safety

Shoppers' behavior this year related to food safety remains similar to last year's and that of 1983. This year, as last, almost nine out of 10 shoppers (88 percent) say that the statement "I usually check the packaging of the foods I buy to make sure it is in good condition" describes them very closely. In 1983, 85 percent of shoppers closely identified with this statement. Shoppers also regularly check the dates on dated food, with eight out of 10 shoppers (78 percent) stating that this behavior describes them very closely, down one percentage point from last year but up two points from 1983. Just under half of all shoppers (48 percent) very closely identify with the concern that some ingredients added to processed food may be harmful or unsafe to eat. Last year's percentage for this concern was 47 percent and 1983's percentage was 50 percent. The percentage of shoppers who avoid buying certain foods because they are concerned about whether they are safe is identical to that recorded last year and in 1983. Slightly under half of all shoppers (46 percent) closely identify with this behavior. Fewer shoppers, but a still substantial minority, closely identify with the statement "I pay a good deal of attention to the list of ingredients on food labels." This year and the past two years, four out of 10 shoppers (41 percent or 40 percent) feel this statement describes them very closely.

Table 27 **Consumer Behavior and Food Safety**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: The following are statements that other people have made. For each one, please tell me how close it comes to describing you: very close, somewhat close, not very close, or not at all.

				1985				
		1983 Very Close	1984 Very Close	Very Close	Somewhat Close	Not Very Close	Not at All	Not Sure
I usually check the packaging of the foods I buy to make sure it is in good condition	%	85	87	88	10	2	*	*
I almost always check the dates on dated foods	%	76	79	78	14	5	2	*
I feel concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat	%	50	47	48	27	16	7	2
I avoid buying certain foods because I am concerned about whether they are safe	%	46	46	46	24	17	12	1
I pay a good deal of attention to the list of ingredients on food labels	%	41	40	40	29	22	9	1

*Less than 0.5%.

Concerns About Specific Food Attributes

Last year for the first time *Trends* asked shoppers to indicate the extent to which they felt certain items in food were hazardous. This year's responses to the same question show some fluctuation in the degree of shopper concern, although the ranking of these items remains unchanged.

Almost three out of four shoppers (73 percent) consider residues such as pesticides and herbicides to be a serious health hazard. Although down four percentage points from last year's 77 percent figure, such residues are still perceived to be the most hazardous item asked about. Forty-four percent of shoppers consider cholesterol in food to present a serious health hazard, making this substance second on the list of concerns.

Although not asked about last year, the presence of fat in food is also perceived to be a serious health hazard by better than four in 10 shoppers (42 percent). Shoppers' concerns about salt in food and about additives and preservatives have also increased slightly this year. Somewhat fewer than four in 10 shoppers consider each of these substances to present a serious health hazard (39 percent and 36 percent, respectively). Sugar and artificial coloring continue to be viewed as the least hazardous items in food, with less than three out of 10 shoppers (29 percent and 28 percent) viewing each of them as a serious health hazard.

Table 28 **Consumer Concern About Selected Food Attributes**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: How concerned are you about the following items being in food? Would you say that (READ EACH ITEM) (is/are) a serious health hazard, somewhat of a hazard, or not a hazard at all?

Base: 1005		1984 Serious Hazard	1985 Serious Hazard	1985 Something of a Hazard	1985 Not a Hazard at All	1985 Not Sure
Residues, such as pesticides and herbicides	%	77	73	21	4	2
Cholesterol	%	45	44	49	5	2
Fats	%	x	42	51	5	2
Salt in food	%	37	39	51	9	1
Additives and preservatives	%	32	36	55	8	2
Sugar in food	%	31	29	54	16	1
Artificial coloring	%	26	28	48	21	3

x = Not asked.

Shoppers appear to be more concerned about pesticides and herbicides as residues than they are about hormones and antibiotic residues in meat. Nevertheless, more than four shoppers in 10 (43 percent) are very concerned about the latter type of residue, and 39 percent are somewhat concerned. The degree of concern about these residues varies by age group with shoppers aged 65 and older being the least concerned (37 percent, very concerned).

Table 29 **Level of Shoppers' Concern About Fresh Meat Containing Hormones or Antibiotic Residues**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Are you personally very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned about the possibility that fresh meat products may contain some hormones or antibiotic residues?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	43	40	45	52	37
Somewhat concerned	39	45	40	31	32
Not very concerned	8	8	7	8	9
Not at all concerned	7	6	7	5	15
Not sure	3	1	2	3	7

*Less than 0.5%.

One final product safety issue investigated in this year's *Trends* was shoppers' awareness of and attitudes toward irradiation as a technique for sterilizing and preserving foods. Although this technique has been in existence for some time, apparently because of its limited usage only three out of 10 shoppers (29 percent) have ever heard of it.

Having been read a brief description of this technique, shoppers were asked whether they preferred the use of irradiation or the use of chemical preservatives as a method of sterilization. One-third of all shoppers (33 percent) are uncertain as to which of these two techniques they prefer; of those stating a preference, shoppers are evenly divided between the two techniques.

However, a further examination reveals that 39 percent of shoppers who have heard of the technique of irradiation prefer it over the use of chemical preservatives. In contrast, among those shoppers who have not heard of the technique, a greater proportion (37 percent) are uncertain as to which of the two techniques they prefer, but more (28 percent) prefer chemical preservatives than prefer irradiation (22 percent). These findings suggest that the use of irradiation may become more acceptable as shoppers become more knowledgeable about the technique.

Table 30 **Awareness of and Attitudes Toward Irradiation**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: There is a technique for sterilizing and preserving foods called *irradiation*. This technique kills many harmful organisms or diseases by treating foods with low levels of ionizing radiation. Prior to this interview had you ever heard of the technique of *irradiation?*

	Total
Base	1005
	%
Yes, had heard	29
No, had not heard	70
Not sure	1

Q.: In general which would you prefer as a method for sterilizing and preserving foods -- the use of chemical preservatives or the use of this irradiation technique?

	Total	Had Heard of Technique	Had Not Heard of Technique
Base	1005	307	687
	%	%	%
Chemical preservatives	27	24	28
Irradiation technique	27	39	22
Makes no difference (vol.)	2	1	2
Neither (vol.)	11	14	10
Not sure	33	22	37

Ensuring Food Safety

For the question about whom shoppers rely on to ensure that products are safe, this year's *Trends* results are quite different from those of previous years. Although a plurality of shoppers continue to rely on themselves to be sure products are safe, there has been a 10-percentage-point decline in this level of self-reliance from 48 percent last year to 38 percent this year. This decrease in self-reliance is accompanied by an increase in reliance on federal and state government. Last year just over two out of 10 shoppers (22 percent) said they relied most on the federal government; only three percent said they relied most on state government to ensure product safety. This year's figures show that now three out of 10 shoppers (31 percent) rely on the federal government and six percent rely on state government. Shoppers also report a lower level of confidence in manufacturers, with seven percent this year compared with 11 percent last year relying on them to ensure product safety.

Table 31

Those Whom Shoppers Rely on to Ensure That the Products They Buy Are Safe: 1983-1985

Base: The shopping public

Q.: As far as you personally are concerned, whom do you rely on most to be sure that the products you buy are safe: the federal government, the state government, consumer organizations, manufacturers, retailers, or yourself as an individual?

	Total		
	1983	1984	1985
	%	%	%
Yourself as an individual	46	48	38
Federal government	24	22	31
Manufacturers	13	11	7
Consumer organizations	6	9	8
Retailers	5	5	6
State government	3	3	6
Other (volunteered)	*	1	1
None (volunteered)	1	*	1
Not sure	2	1	2

*Less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 7

FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Favorite Foods

This year's *Trends* investigated the various types of foods shoppers purchase and consume on a regular basis. Shoppers were asked first to indicate whether their family has a favorite main course item that they serve for dinner once a week or more often. Overall, it would appear that most shoppers have varied dinner menus in that four out of 10 say they do not have a favorite main course item. However, beef and poultry are the predominant favorites, being cited by 22 percent and 17 percent, respectively, of all shoppers as a regularly served main course item. Favorite main course items mentioned less frequently include pasta (eight percent), fish or seafood (two percent), and pork (two percent).

Male and female shoppers appear to differ somewhat in their main course preferences. Men strongly prefer meat (26 percent) over poultry (13 percent), whereas women cite poultry (18 percent) almost as often as beef (21 percent).

Table 32 **Shoppers Identify Their Favorite Main Course Items**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Do you and your family have a favorite main course item that you have for dinner once a week or more often?

			Women		
	Total	Men	Total	Working	Non-working
Base	1005	406	599	339	251
	%	%	%	%	%
Item					
None	41	41	41	40	43
Beef	22	26	21	24	17
Poultry	17	13	18	17	19
Pasta	8	6	8	8	9
Fish or seafood	2	4	2	2	1
Pork	2	3	2	2	2
Vegetables	1	1	1	*	2
Dairy	*	–	*	*	*
Veal	–	–	–	–	–
Combination	1	1	2	2	1
Other	4	3	4	4	4
Not sure	*	*	*	*	*

*Less than 0.5%.

Among shoppers who name a favorite main course item, the greatest proportion (41 percent) cite taste as a reason for serving it as often as they do. Ease of preparation is also a consideration, being cited by over one-fourth of shoppers who name a favorite main course item (27 percent). Two other frequently mentioned reasons for serving these foods are nutritional or health value (23 percent) and economy (20 percent). Men more often than women cite taste (46 percent vs. 40 percent) as the reason why these foods are their favorites, whereas women are slightly more likely to cite ease of preparation (27 percent vs. 24 percent) and economy (20 percent vs. 18 percent) as reasons.

Table 33 **Reasons for Frequently Serving Favorite Main Course Items**

Base: Those in the shopping public who have a favorite main course item

Q.: What are the reasons you have this main course item as often as you do?

			Women		
	Total	Men	Total	Working	Non-working
Base	591	238	353	203	142
	%	%	%	%	%
Reason					
Taste	41	46	40	43	37
Ease of preparation	27	24	27	35	17
Nutritional/health value	23	25	23	21	25
Economy	20	18	20	21	19
Calorie content	5	4	5	6	6
Texture	1	1	1	*	1
Other	21	20	21	18	27
Not sure	5	2	5	4	7

*Less than 0.5%.

Shoppers show more variety in their preferences for a favorite food served as a snack or treat. Almost half of all shoppers (46 percent) say they have no favorite snack food. The category of nuts, grains, and popcorn (10 percent) has a slight edge over the categories of ice cream, fruits and vegetables, and chips and pretzels, the latter three categories each being cited as favorite by eight percent of shoppers. Men are less likely than women to have a favorite snack or treat food; 52 percent of men and 44 percent of women say they have no favorite.

Table 34 Shoppers Indicate Their Favorite Food Served as a Snack or Treat

Base: The shopping public

Q.: Do you and your family have a favorite food that you serve as a snack or treat at least once a week?

			Women		
	Total	Men	Total	Working	Non-working
Base	1005	406	599	399	251
	%	%	%	%	%
Item					
None	46	52	44	40	50
Nuts/grains/popcorn	10	7	11	14	7
Ice cream	8	7	9	8	10
Fruits and vegetables	8	5	9	10	7
Chips/pretzels	8	5	9	11	6
Baked goods	6	6	6	7	4
Candy and other sweets	2	2	2	1	2
Other	10	12	9	8	12
Not sure	1	1	1	*	1

*Less than 0.5%.

Shoppers who name a favorite snack food or treat tend to cite the same reasons for liking it as are given for serving favorite main course items. Almost half of this group (48 percent) say taste is the reason; 26 percent say nutritional or health value, and 18 percent say ease of preparation. However, economy is rarely (seven percent) a reason for frequently serving a particular food as a snack or treat.

Table 35 Reasons for Frequently Serving Foods as Snacks or Treats

Base: Those in the shopping public who have a favorite food served as a snack or treat

Q.: What are the main reasons why this is a favorite of your family?

			Women		
	Total	Men	Total	Working	Non-working
Base	522	192	300	204	122
	%	%	%	%	%
Reason					
Taste	48	47	48	50	46
Nutritional/health value	26	21	27	26	28
Ease of preparation	18	18	18	19	15
Economy	7	6	8	10	4
Calorie content	6	6	6	6	7
Texture	3	1	3	4	2
Other	20	21	19	16	26
Not sure	7	5	7	7	5

Frequency of Purchase of Various Types of Foods

Shoppers were also asked how often they purchase six different types of foods when they shop at the supermarket. Of the six categories, delicatessen and other carryout food items are the most frequently purchased. Over half of all shoppers (54 percent) regularly or occasionally purchase these types of food. A majority of shoppers also purchase unbranded or generic products regularly or occasionally (51 percent). Unpackaged or bulk foods and items from a salad bar are regularly or occasionally purchased by a large minority of shoppers (43 percent and 36 percent, respectively). Very few shoppers purchase gourmet or specialty foods regularly (eight percent), but over one-third purchase them occasionally (37 percent). Products especially designed for microwave cooking are purchased frequently by 28 percent of shoppers; however, six out of 10 (60 percent) say they never purchase such products or that the question is not applicable to them. Presumably this 60 percent represents households that do not have microwave ovens. This would be consistent with industry estimates that in late 1983, 33 percent of households had microwaves and by the end of 1985, 50 percent would have them.*

The frequency of purchase of these six types of foods varies substantially by subpopulation. For example, younger and more affluent shoppers are more likely to purchase food products for microwaves than are older or poorer shoppers. Baby boom shoppers and Westerners are the most likely to purchase unbranded or generic products. Bulk foods are purchased most frequently by lower income shoppers, whereas gourmet foods are most often purchased by shoppers with incomes of over $25,000. Salad bar items appeal particularly to Southerners, and delicatessen items are unusually favored by Easterners.

Table 36 **Frequency of Purchase of Specific Types of Food**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: When you shop at the supermarket how often do you purchase (READ EACH ITEM)? Would you say regularly, occasionally, rarely, or never?

		Age				Income			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over	$7,500 or Less	$7,501 to $15,000	$15,001 to $25,000	$25,001 and Over
Base	1005	418	184	213	159	113	153	203	414
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Percent who regularly or occasionally purchase									
Food products designed especially for microwave cooking	29	33	34	26	18	12	19	28	40
Unbranded or generic products	51	56	49	49	42	52	55	62	47
Unpackaged or bulk foods	43	43	48	45	38	50	49	40	43
Gourmet or specialty foods	45	45	56	34	43	37	40	36	52
Items from a salad bar	36	39	41	33	29	39	39	34	34
Delicatessen or other carryout food items	54	54	60	52	50	52	56	53	55

* *Business Week*, July 16, 1984, pp. 30-31.

Table 36 (Continued) Frequency of Purchase of Specific Types of Food

Base: The shopping public

		Size of Place			Region			
	Total	Central City	Inside SMSA	Outside SMSA	East	Mid-west	South	West
Base	1005	305	453	247	251	251	327	176
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Percent who regularly or occasionally purchase								
Food products designed especially for microwave cooking	29	23	33	28	20	32	29	37
Unbranded or generic products	51	50	48	57	46	57	45	60
Unpackaged or bulk foods	43	42	42	48	47	47	38	43
Gourmet or specialty foods	45	46	49	35	51	36	46	47
Items from a salad bar	36	37	34	39	32	34	43	34
Delicatessen or other carryout food items	54	56	56	50	64	51	51	49

Major Changes in Eating Habits

As a final question about food consumption habits, shoppers were asked what major changes there have been in their household's eating habits in the past year. A large minority of shoppers report that they have not had any such changes (44 percent), and the types of changes indicated by those who have made changes are quite varied. The two most common changes mentioned are a reduction in the amount of meat eaten (nine percent) and an increase in the consumption of vegetables (nine percent). One out of twenty shoppers (five percent) say that their families are eating more fruit now. Three other types of mentions are given by five percent or more of shoppers. These are: eating less (seven percent), eating more (five percent), and eating less sugar (five percent).

Compared to other age groups, baby boom shoppers report more changes in their eating habits. Less than four in 10 (38 percent) baby boomers said there had not been any changes. This compares to 46 percent for 40- to 49-year-olds, 44 percent for 50- to 64-year-olds, and 52 percent for shoppers aged 65 or older. In terms of specific types of changes, baby boomers more often report having reduced their consumption of meat (10 percent vs. nine percent of all shoppers). However, they more often report eating more vegetables (12 percent vs. nine percent of all shoppers) and more fruits (seven percent vs. five percent of all shoppers). Overall, seven percent of the shopping public report eating less now, while five percent report eating more. However, the reverse is true for baby boomers. Nine percent of this group report eating more as compared to four percent who report eating less.

Table 37 **Major Changes in Household Eating Habits (Volunteered)**

Base: The shopping public

Q.: In the past year, what would you say the major changes in your household's eating habits have been?

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Change					
None	44	38	46	44	52
No/less meat/red meat	9	10	9	10	6
More vegetables/fresh vegetables	9	12	7	8	2
Cutting down/eating less	7	4	5	10	11
Eating more	5	9	3	1	1
No/less sugar	5	3	7	5	7
More fruits/fresh fruits	5	7	3	4	2
No/less salt	4	2	4	5	11
Dieting/trying to control weight	4	3	5	4	5
No/less junk foods	4	6	3	2	-
More nutritional/natural/health foods	3	4	4	4	2
No/less/lower fats	3	2	6	4	3
Fewer meals at home/eating out more	3	4	4	2	3
More frozen foods	3	3	5	2	3
More poultry	2	2	3	3	3
More fish	2	1	4	1	5
No/less sweets	2	3	-	4	1
No/less cholesterol	2	*	2	3	6
Easy to prepare quick meals	2	3	2	1	-
Using microwave more	2	2	3	3	-
No/less preservatives/additives	2	2	3	2	-
Less expensive foods	2	2	-	1	2
Not sure	2	2	4	1	3

*Less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 8

A COMPARISON OF SHOPPERS IN THE BABY BOOM GENERATION WITH THOSE IN OTHER AGE GROUPS

Recently, considerable attention has focused on the unique characteristics of the baby boom generation. Although the baby boom period has been defined in various ways, persons born between the years 1946 and 1964 have most consistently been considered to be part of this group. If we use this definition, approximately 42 percent of all shoppers surveyed in this year's *Trends* study fall into this category.

In comparison with the total shopping public, shoppers of the baby boom generation come from larger-than-average households. Of all shoppers, 48 percent come from households of one or two persons, and 51 percent come from households of three persons or more. In contrast, only 38 percent of baby boom shoppers come from single or two-person households, while 63 percent come from larger households.

Baby boom shoppers also report higher-than-average incomes. Only four in 10 shoppers generally (41 percent) report household incomes in excess of $25,000; however, half of the baby boom group live in a household with this level of income. Only shoppers aged 40 to 49 report higher incomes, with 58 percent in households with incomes in excess of $25,000 a year.

Although shoppers aged 40 to 49 earn more than baby boomers, the latter are substantially more optimistic about their future personal economic situation. Just one-third of the 40- to 49-year-olds feel their economic situation will improve in the next year, whereas almost half of the baby boom group (45 percent) express this degree of optimism. Also, while 14 percent of all shoppers expect their economic situation to get worse, only nine percent of the baby boom group are pessimistic.

In light of their vastly more optimistic outlook, it is interesting to note that members of the baby boom group may be viewed as more frugal in terms of their grocery expenses. While this group spends an above-average amount per family on groceries ($64 vs. $61), because of their larger-than-average family size, this translates into only $23 per person. This is slightly less than the overall average of $24 per person, and no other age group spends this little on a per-person basis.

Table 38 **Demographic Profile of the Baby Boom Generation and Other Age Groups**

Base: The shopping public

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Family Size					
1	14	10	11	14	31
2	34	28	15	46	57
3-4	38	47	51	29	11
5 and over	13	16	22	9	2
Income					
$7,500 or less	11	5	6	12	31
$7,501-$15,000	15	14	5	17	28
$15,001-$25,000	20	25	21	20	10
$25,001 and over	41	51	58	33	8
Marital Status					
Single	11	18	8	5	5
Married	67	70	73	69	52
Separated	3	4	3	2	-
Divorced	8	8	12	9	2
Widowed	10	*	4	15	40
Personal Economic Situation in Next Year					
Improve	33	45	33	23	19
Get worse	14	9	17	21	18
Remain the same	46	43	47	50	47
Average Weekly Grocery Expenses					
Per family	$61	$64	$72	$56	$44
Per person	$24	$23	$25	$24	$25

*Less than 0.5%.

The economizing behavior of shoppers in the baby boom group is perhaps less frequent than for shoppers in general. Baby boom shoppers do report an above-average usage of price-off coupons (34 percent vs. 30 percent). However, they less frequently look in the newspaper for grocery specials (36 percent vs. 41 percent), are less likely to compare prices (24 percent vs. 27 percent), and relatively seldom shop at stores other than their principal one for advertised specials (eight percent vs. 10 percent).

In their use of time-saving techniques, baby boom shoppers do not differ dramatically from the rest of the shopping public. They are more likely (75 percent) than any other age group to at least occasionally buy brands because they are more visible and easier to find. They also shop more frequently at convenience stores. Just over two-thirds (67 percent) of this group say they at least occasionally do this, whereas the percentage for all shoppers is 61 percent. In this regard, baby boomers differ most dramatically from shoppers 65 and over, only 52 percent of whom frequently shop at convenience stores.

On the other hand, baby boomers are less likely than other age groups to look only at the items they need when shopping and are less likely to take packaged meat rather than ask for a different cut.

Baby boom shoppers, with those in the 40 to 49 age group, report the highest average number of supermarket visits per week (2.4). In contrast, older shoppers (65 and over) average only 2.0 trips a week.

Table 39 **Supermarket Shopping Habits of the Baby Boom Generation and Other Age Groups**

Base: The shopping public

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Economizing (Pretty Much Every Time You Shop)					
Look in the newspaper for grocery specials	41	36	34	50	54
Use price-off coupons	30	34	23	31	26
Compare prices at different supermarkets	27	24	22	36	30
Go to supermarkets other than principal one for advertised specials	10	8	7	14	12
Saving Time (at Least Occasionally)					
Look only at the items you know you need	92	91	92	92	94
Take packaged meat available rather than ask for a different cut	83	80	81	91	84
Buy certain brands because they're more visible and easier to find	72	75	72	71	68
Go to a convenience store rather than a supermarket	61	67	66	56	52
Number of different supermarkets visited in a week (average)	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
Number of visits to the supermarket in a week (average)	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.0

Baby boomers exhibit a consistently below-average concern about nutrition. Of the four age groups examined, they are the least likely (55 percent) to be very concerned about nutritional content. This is in contrast to 63 percent of 40- to 49-year-olds, 62 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds, and 58 percent of those aged 65 and older. Baby boomers less often pay attention to ingredients listed on food labels. Whereas 40 percent of all shoppers say this behavior describes them very closely, only 36 percent of baby boomers say this. Similarly, 33 percent of the baby boomers, as compared with 36 percent of all shoppers, feel that supermarkets have a responsibility to provide health and nutrition information.

Baby boomers' behavior also reflects their lower level of nutritional concern. They check government grading on meats and poultry less often (47 percent vs. 52 percent). They are also less likely to read articles and books on nutrition (25 percent vs. 32 percent).

Table 40 **Nutrition-Related Concerns and Behavior of Various Age Groups**

Base: The shopping public

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned about nutritional content of what I eat	59	55	63	62	58
Pay a good deal of attention to ingredients listed on food labels	40	36	40	49	42
Feel providing nutrition and health information is a supermarket's responsibility	36	33	41	40	35
Frequently					
Check for government grading on meats and poultry	52	47	58	54	53
Avoid buying products that have no nutritional information	35	34	43	37	26
Read articles or books on nutrition	32	25	34	40	39

Baby boomers also feel less concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat. Forty-eight percent of all shoppers express this concern; only 46 percent of baby boomers feel this way.

This lower level of concern is also reflected in the generally lower percentage of baby boomers who feel that certain items represent serious health hazards in food. The greatest disparity in this regard exists for concerns about fats and cholesterol. For these two items, 42 percent and 44 percent, respectively, of the total shopping public consider them to present a serious health hazard. The corresponding percentages for baby boom shoppers are 31 percent and 36 percent. Only 31 percent of baby boom shoppers feel salt in food is a serious health hazard. However, for the total sample this percentage is 39 percent. Baby boomers are also less likely to consider additives and preservatives, sugar, and artificial coloring to be serious hazards in food.

Table 41 **Food-Safety-Related Concerns of Various Age Groups**

Base: The shopping public

		Age			
	Total	Baby Boom	40-49 Years	50-64 Years	65 and Over
Base	1005	433	181	207	153
	%	%	%	%	%
Feel concerned that some ingredients added to processed foods may be harmful or unsafe to eat	48	46	53	50	43
Feel are a serious health hazard in food					
Residues, such as pesticides and herbicides	73	75	76	75	63
Cholesterol	44	36	42	52	57
Fats	42	31	42	48	60
Salt	39	31	40	50	43
Additives and preservatives	36	30	42	41	38
Sugar	29	26	33	33	28
Artificial coloring	28	25	33	29	29

METHODOLOGY

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The data for this survey were collected from 1,005 telephone interviews conducted from January 10 through 21, 1985. The sample was drawn from the civilian adult population of the United States, 18 years of age and older. Households contacted for the survey were selected by a procedure known as random digit dialing (RDD). This procedure ensures the inclusion of individuals with unlisted or not yet listed telephone numbers as well as those with listed numbers and thus provides a sample that reflects the total U.S. population.

Each household selected by the RDD procedure was screened first for the head of the household (either male or female) and then for recent experience with shopping for groceries. Only heads of household who shopped for groceries in the previous two weeks were interviewed for the survey.

The final sample was controlled to consist of 60 percent female heads of household and 40 percent male heads of household in order to increase the reliability of the male shopper samples. However, the sample was weighted to an 80 percent female-20 percent male ratio to maintain comparability with previous studies in the *Trends* series. Aside from this stratification and weighting by sex, the sample is a national cross-section of shoppers. Therefore, all subpopulation percentages, e.g., 42 percent baby-boom generation, are projectable to the American shopping public as a whole.

A profile of the total sample follows.

Table 42 **Demographic Profile of Supermarket Shoppers**

Base: The shopping public

	Number in Sample	Unweighted Percentage in Sample	Weighted Percentage in Sample
		%	%
Total	1005	100	100
Sex			
Men	406	40	20
Women	599	60	80
Working	339	34	45
Nonworking	251	25	34
*Principal Shoppers**			
Total	718	71	80
Men	184	18	9
Women	534	53	71
Type of Household			
With children	441	44	44
Two wage earners	307	31	31
Age			
18-24 years	66	7	7
25-39 years	376	37	36
40-49 years	181	18	18
50-64 years	207	21	21
65 and over	153	15	16

Table 42 (continued) Demographic Profile of Supermarket Shoppers

Base: The shopping public

	Number in Sample	Unweighted Percentage in Sample	Weighted Percentage in Sample
Income		%	%
$7,500 or less	102	10	11
$7,501-$15,000	146	15	15
$15,001-$25,000	213	21	20
$25,001 and over	436	43	41
Race			
White	871	87	87
Black	75	7	8
Hispanic	59	6	6
Marital Status			
Single	129	13	11
Married	687	68	67
Separated/divorced/widowed	184	18	21
Education			
High school or less	523	52	55
Some college/college graduate	478	48	45
Size of Place			
Central city	303	30	30
Remainder of metropolitan area	464	46	45
Outside metropolitan area	238	24	25
*Region***			
East	249	25	25
Midwest	253	25	25
South	311	31	33
West	192	19	18

*Principal shoppers are those respondents who identified themselves as being the person in their household principally responsible for the weekly food shopping.

***East includes*: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Midwest includes: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

South includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

West includes: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Note: Percentages may add up to less than 100% because of nonresponse.

Sampling Error

It is important to note that survey results are subject to sampling error, i.e., the difference between obtained results and those that would be obtained by surveying the entire population. The size of this error varies with the size of the sample and with the percentage of respondents giving a particular answer. The following table shows the range of error for samples of four different sizes and at different percentages of response:

Sample Error (±) at 95% Confidence Level for Samples of Four Different Sizes

Percentage Response	Size of Sample			
	1000	600	400	100
	%	%	%	%
10 (90)	2.2	2.4	3	7
20 (80)	2.9	3.3	4	10
30 (70)	3.3	3.7	4.6	11
40 (60)	3.5	4	4.9	12
50 (50)	3.6	4.1	5	12

For example, if the percent response for a sample size of 1,000 is 40, in 95 cases out of 100 the response in the population will be between 36.5 percent and 43.5 percent. This figure accounts only for sampling error. Survey research is susceptible to other errors as well, such as data handling and interviewer recording. However, the procedures used by Louis Harris and Associates keep errors of this kind to a minimum.

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